

ANGLO-SYRIAN RELATIONS*Part One:*

Following is the text of a statement delivered in the House of Commons by Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe on 24 October 1986:

The House will be aware that the trial of Nezar Hindawi at the Central Criminal Court ended today. Hindawi was found guilty of attempting to place a bomb on an El Al aircraft at Heathrow on 17 April and was sentenced to 45 years imprisonment.

Hindawi has been convicted of a monstrous and inhumane crime. If he had been successful, hundreds of innocent lives would have been lost. The way in which he deceived his pregnant girlfriend into carrying the bomb was particularly wicked and has aroused deep and universal repugnance.

There is conclusive evidence of Syrian official involvement with Hindawi. The House will recall that in May after Hindawi's arrest the Government demanded the withdrawal of three Syrian Embassy attaches whose diplomatic immunity the Syrian Government declined to waive so that the police could question them.

Evidence at the trial revealed something of the part these attaches played in this affair. The Syrians claim that they dealt with Hindawi throughout as a bona fide journalist. That claim is frankly incredible.

Evidence was produced at the trial that:

- Hindawi spent some time in hotel accommodation reserved for Syrian Arab Airlines crew.
- Hindawi spent the night after the bombing attempt in Syrian Embassy accommodation, where his hair clippings and hair dye were found.

Certain facts are undisputed:

- Hindawi travelled on an official Syrian passport in a false name.
- Hindawi's visa applications were on two occasions backed by official notes from the Syrian Foreign Ministry.
- Hindawi met the Syrian Ambassador, Dr Haydar, in his Embassy after the discovery of the bomb. ..2/

*[The text of this statement was provided by the British High Commission, Canberra].

In addition we have:

- Independent evidence that the Syrian Ambassador was personally involved several months before the commission of the offence in securing for Hindawi the sponsorship of the Syrian intelligence authorities..
- and we have equally compelling evidence that during his detention Hindawi sought to contact secretly Syrian intelligence officials in Damascus with a request for their assistance in securing his release.

The whole House will be outraged by the Syrian role in this case. It is unacceptable that the Ambassador, members of his staff, and the Syrian authorities in Damascus should be involved with a criminal like Hindawi. We have therefore decided to break diplomatic relations with Syria. Dr Haydar was informed of this decision this morning and was told to close his Embassy and leave the country within 14 days: The British Embassy in Damascus will also be closed. We shall seek to make alternative arrangements of the usual kind for the protection of British interests in Syria. We are also tightening the security arrangements surrounding the operation in London of Syrian Arab Airlines by imposing special control on all SAA aircraft and crew, including stricter searches of personnel, passengers and baggage.

End of Part One.

Part Two:

Sir Geoffrey Howe said:

The House will recall that last June we introduced a tougher and stricter Visa regime for Syrians wishing to enter the United Kingdom. We shall maintain and strengthen this regime

We are taking urgent steps to inform our European partners and other friendly governments about the details of the case and the measures we are taking. We are impressing on them the wider security implications of the involvement of the Syrian authorities and are urging them to take appropriate supporting action.

We regret that these actions have been forced upon us by the unacceptable behaviour of the Syrian authorities. We remain determined to play our full part with moderate Arab States in the search for peaceful settlement of the Region's problems. But we remain second to none in our determination to continue the fight to stamp out terrorism in our midst.

End of Part Two.

TURKEY - AIR PURSUIT ACROSS IRAQI BORDER *

Announcement by the Turkish Government on 15 August 1985:

It has been observed, with dismay, that the operation carried out on 15 August, 1986 against the terrorists across the Iraq border, has been interpreted wrongly by some countries.

This operation was aimed solely against the terrorists who were frequently crossing the Iraq border into Turkey and attacking innocent people and members of our armed forces. This operation was in conformity with the hot-pursuit principle which is recognised by the international law and was not directed to any third country and had no relation to the Iran/Iraq war.

It must be known that should such attacks by the terrorists inside the Turkish borders take place, this will be countered through similar operations in future.

Turkey respects the territorial integrity and independence of all regional countries. Turkey has the right to expect the same respect from her neighbours.

Announcement by the Spokesman of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the operation against the terrorists near the Iraq border, 25 August 1986:

It was established by the Regional Martial Law Command, that a group of terrorists fled to Iraq territory after ambushing a group of Turkish military personnel on 12 August, 1986 at the Ortabag region of the Uludere section of the Hakkari province where one major, one non-commissioned officer and ten soldiers were killed and ten were wounded.

Turkish authorities were also aware that these terrorists, after participating in various raids in Turkish territory, were in the habit of taking refuge in Iraq.

Following this incident, Turkish Air Force planes, within the framework of the previous agreement with Iraq and in order to apprehend and eliminate the terrorists, completed an air pursuit operation near the Turkish/Iraq border and adjoining Iraq territory. During this operation, terrorist refuges were bombed.

*[These are unofficial translations provided by the Turkish Embassy, Canberra].